

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT

FOR several years Mr. Edward J. O'Brien has, with great industry and a certain amount of discrimination, been shifting, classifying and judging the short stories as they have been appearing in various American periodicals. The result of this labor has been the annual publication of a volume including some twenty tales that he has deemed the best of the preceding year and what he calls a "Year Book of the American Short Story," made up of addresses of magazines publishing short stories, a bibliographical roll of honor of American short stories, a roll of honor of foreign short stories published in American magazines, a critical summary of the best books of short stories, a consideration of magazine averages and various indexes. "The Best Short Stories of 1921" has appeared, from the press of Messrs. Small, Maynard & Co. of Boston. It is an interesting and instructive volume. Whether we agree with it or not is another matter.

AFTER all, Mr. O'Brien's selection is, as all selections of this kind must be, to a certain extent arbitrary, and therefore any criticism of his selection is naturally in a measure arbitrary. He says that such and such a story is the best of the year. We say that it is nothing of the kind. It is entirely a matter of personal taste and opinion. In turning over the pages of Mr. O'Brien's annual volume we always think of certain memorable stories of the past, wondering what their fate would have been had Mr. O'Brien been compiling for all the years of the last century. Somehow we do not feel that such tales as Edward Everett Hale's "The Man Without a Country," or Thomas Bailey Aldrich's "Marjorie Daw" or Mark Twain's "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" would have fitted into the general scheme.

MR. O'BRIEN'S first compilation was of the stories that appeared during 1915. The first story that he selected, the one that he presented as being the best of that year, was significant as indicating the state of mind in which he has approached his editorial task. It was "Zelig," by Benjamin Rosenblatt, which he called "a noble contribution to American literature." "Zelig" was a good story. But it was good Russian rather than good American. Its inconsequential setting was on the East Side of New York city, but save for that it was not an American story at all. It was alien in thought, in sentiment and even in language. To comprehend it fully a glossary was needed. The American reading it was in a state of mental bewilderment akin to that of Eustace Cheever of Mr. Kipling's "A Conference of the Powers," listening to the chatter of the young subalterns. The selection of "Zelig" and the dedication to Mr. Rosenblatt, its author of the first volume of the "Best Short Stories" set the keynote of Mr. O'Brien's judgment and taste.

WE had always thought of Mr. O'Brien making up his list and bestowing his stars for particular excellence, as Baedeker formerly starred restaurants and hotels for the benefit of the traveler, according to a formula known only to himself. In the introduction to the present volume he surprises us by the assertion that he is not at all interested in formulae, and that he holds that organized criticism at its best would be nothing more than dead criticism, as all dogmatic interpretation of life is always dead. "What has interested me," he says, "to the exclusion of other things is the fresh, living current which flows through the

best American work, and the psychological and imaginative reality which American writers have conferred upon it."

FOLLOWING an alphabetical arrangement according to authors, Mr. O'Brien has selected as the best short stories of 1921 "Brothers," by Sherwood Anderson (from the *Bookman*); "Fanutz," by Konrad Bereovici (from the *Dial*); "Experiment," by Maxwell Struthers Burt (from the *Pictorial Review*); "Darkness," by Irvin S. Cobb (from the *Saturday Evening Post*); "An Instrument of the Gods," by Lincoln Colcord (from the *American Magazine*); "The Lizard God," by Charles J. Finger (from *AI's Well*); "Under the Dome," by Waldo Frank (from the *Dial*); "French Eva," by Katherine Fullerton Gerould (from *Scribner's Magazine*); "The Past," by Ellen Glasgow (from *Good Housekeeping*); "His Smile," by Susan Glaspell (from the *Pictorial Review*); "The Harbor Master," by Richard Matthews Hallet (from *Harper's Magazine*); "Green Gardens," by Frances Noyes Hoyt (from *Scribner's Magazine*); "She Walks in Beauty," by Fannie Hurst (from the *Cosmopolitan*); "The Little Master of the Sky," by Manuel Komroff (from the *Dial*); "The Man with the Good Face," by Frank Luther Mott (from the *Midland*); "Master of Fallen Years," by Vincent O'Sullivan (from the *Smart Set*); "The Shame Dance," by Wilbur Daniel Steele (from *Harper's Magazine*); "Kindred," by Harriet Maxon Thayer (from the *Midland*); "Shelby," by Charles Hanson Towne (from the *Smart Set*); and "The Wallow of the Sea," by Mary Heaton Vorse (from *Harper's Magazine*).

ELSEWHERE in this issue of the book section Frederick O'Brien, author of "White Shadows in the South Seas" and "Mystic Isles of the South Seas," writes of Charmian Kittredge (Mrs. Jack) London's new book on "Hawaii." Much of the material making up this book was gathered during the cruise of the "Snark," which was meant to encircle the globe in imitation of Capt. Slocum's voyage in the "Spray," but which came to an end in Australia on account of Jack London's illness. Few journeys have been so exploited in advance as the "Snark" cruise, and Jack London was deluged with letters from applicants who wished to share the adventure. Ninety per cent. of the volunteers offered to work in any capacity, and 99 per cent. offered to work without salary. The possession of a "passionate fondness for geography" was the way one applicant expressed the wanderlust that was in him. Another wrote: "I am cursed with an eternal yearning always to be on the move, consequently this letter to you." A third said he wanted to go "because his feet itched." Almost all the applicants wanted Mr. London to telegraph, at their expense, his acceptance of their services; quite a number offered to put up a bond to guarantee their appearance at sailing date.

MANY of the applicants seemed to have vague ideas about the work to be done on the "Snark," as, for example, the one who wrote: "I am taking the liberty of writing you this note to find out if there would be any possibility of my going with you as one of the crew of your boat to make sketches and illustrations." Several offers to serve, as one of them phrased it, "as assistant in filing materials collected for books and novels." One man gave the following qualifications: "I am an orphan, living with my uncle, who is a hot Revolutionary Socialist, and who says that a man without the red blood of adventure is an animated dishrag." Another thought himself particularly fitted because he had "seen

the fish boats unload." Physicians, surgeons and dentists offered in large numbers to go along, and, like all the professional men, offered to go without pay, to serve in any capacity, and to pay, even, for the privilege of so serving.

SIR PHILIP GIBBS'S "More That Must Be Told" contains an account of an interview with the late Pope Benedict XV., and certain reflections on the Pope's attitude during the war. "I remember how," writes Sir Philip, "through the war many people not Catholics had looked to the Pope as the one man who might rise above the conflict and in thundering words, or perhaps in a voice of penetrating sweetness, call the world back to sanity and Christian brotherhood. That did not happen. Sorrowful messages came from him deploring the fratricidal strife; privately he offered himself as mediator and peacemaker, but no message came to stir the hearts of peoples with burning words, irresistible in appeal or command. In England we thought him pro-German. In Germany they thought him pro-Ally."

HALF a dozen men of letters, some of them stars of the first magnitude, figure in the course of Charlie Chaplin's "My Trip Abroad." Sir James Barrie Charlie first met at a party given by E. V. Lucas at the Garrick Club in London. As the screen comedian saw the author of "Peter Pan": "He is a small man, with a dark mustache and a deeply marked, sad face, with heavily shaded eyes. . . . Every one looks jovial except Barrie. His eyes look sad and tired. But he brightens as though all along there had been that hidden smile behind the mask." At table the two are placed side by side, and Barrie says that he is looking for some one to play *Peter Pan* and wants Chaplin to play it. At once the ice is broken and that night the comedian, with Edward Knobloch, is in Barrie's apartment in Adelphi Terrace, overlooking the Thames Embankment, sipping Scotch and exchanging stories.

THEN, after a knock, Gerald du Maurier, the actor and the son of the author of "Trilby," comes in, and the party lasts till the small hours. "I notice that Barrie looks tired and worn, so we leave, walking with Du Maurier up the Strand. . . . Next day there is a card from Bruce Bairnsfather. . . . He carries me out into the country. I ask what Wells is like, and Bruce tells me he is just like 'Wells' and no one else. . . . When I get back to the hotel there is a letter from Wells: 'Do come over. Do you want to meet Shaw? He is really very charming out of the limelight.'"

BUT to bask in the actual presence of the redoubtable "G. B. S." was not to be Charlie's fate. Instead he went prowling about London in the company of Thomas Burke, who wrote "Limehouse Nights." He found Burke particularly companionable because: "He is the one man who sees London through the same kind of glasses as myself. I am told that Burke will be disappointing because he is so silent, but I do not believe that I will be disappointed in him." He found Burke different from expectations. "It is hard to think that this little man with the thin, peaked face and sensitive features is the same one who has blazed into literature such elemental lusts, passions and emotions as characterize his short stories."

EVENTUALLY Charlie spent a week end with H. G. Wells at the latter's home at Easton. But the two first met at an informal dinner. Charlie thus records: "We talk of Russia, and I find no embarrassment in airing my views, but I soon find myself merely the questioner. Wells talks; and, though he sees with the vision of a dreamer, he brings to his views the practical. As he talks he appears very much like an American. He seems very young and full of 'pep'. . . . Wells comments on my dapperness as he helps me on with my coat. 'I see you have a cane with you.' I was also wearing a silk hat. I wonder what Los Angeles and Hollywood would say if I

paraded there in this costume? Wells tries on my hat, then takes my cane and twirls it. The effect is ridiculous, especially as just at the moment I notice the two volumes of 'Outline of History' on his table."

Authors' Works And Their Ways

The Authors Club at its thirty-ninth annual meeting, held recently in Carnegie Hall, New York, announced that a large majority of its 260 members had voted that the book of the most enduring value to American literature published during 1921 was "The Collected Poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson."

The Duttons have ready for immediate publication a new novel by Richard Washburn Child, American Ambassador to Italy. Its title is announced as "The Hands of Nara," and it is said to touch a little upon occult things and to be centrally concerned with the relations between a famous American medical specialist and a young woman from Russia, who convinces him finally that the most important factor in life is "the sorcery of something in the soul."

"Lenin," published by E. P. Dutton & Co., is written by a Russian, M. A. Landau-Aldanov, who is a Socialist of the Labor Party, led by Miakotine and Pechekhonof, and describes himself as a counter revolutionist and anti-militarist. He knows Lenin's character and career, and in addition to his study of Lenin's personality and development he devotes a great deal of attention to an exposition of his economic, political and philosophical ideas and policies, the theories of the social revolution as set forth by Marx, Bakunin and Sorel, and the fundamental ideas of Bolshevism.

Donald B. MacMillan, author of "Four Years in the White North" (Harpers), will in all probability return from his expedition to Baffin Land next summer, according to indirect advices, which state that the explorer's schooner, Bowdoin, failed to reach Fury and Hecla Strait. The Carnegie Institute at Washington has received word that MacMillan is spending the winter at Nauyasuttua, 300 miles south of Fury and Hecla Strait.

Henry T. Finck adopted gardening as his avocation fifty-one years ago, as a boy of 16. Mr. Finck, whose book "Gardening With Brains" the Harpers will publish February 21, describes as follows the obstacles he had to overcome before planting that first garden: "I lived in Portland, Ore., and had to send East for my seeds. At that time there was no railroad connecting Portland with the East, and my seeds were shipped on by stage. It rained most of the time in Oregon, and when the stage got stuck the driver would simply throw out the bags which did not contain letters and leave them there by the roadside. And so my seeds got lost. But in spite of such difficulties I managed to get my garden, and I have had one every year ever since."

Francis Burton Harrison, who has written out his experiences and the convictions he gathered as Governor-General of the Philippines, a book soon to be published by the Century Company under the title of "The Cornerstone of Philippine Independence: A Narrative of Seven Years," is the son of that Mrs. Burton Harrison who administered (anonymously) a genuine shock to the society of her time with her novel "The Anglomaniacs." Although the book made a real sensation owing to the many only slightly concealed portraits of prominent folk it contained, the secret of its authorship was kept successfully by her own household and by Jeanette and Richard Watson Gilder, the only persons who knew it, until serial publication was completed.

William Parr Capes's new book "The Modern City and Its Government" is ready for immediate publication by E. P. Dutton & Co. Mr. Capes is director of the New York State Bureau of Municipal Research and secretary of the New York State Conference of Mayors and Other

City Officials. He was coauthor with Jeanne R. Carpenter of a book on "Municipal Housecleaning," which was published by the Duttons two or three years ago.

Mazo de la Roche, whose first novel "Explorers of the Dawn" has just been published by Alfred A. Knopf, is a Canadian by birth. She received her education in Toronto, in private schools there and in the University of Toronto. Before taking up writing she studied art for seven years.

Among the prominent theatrical people who appear in the pages of Thomas Beer's new novel of the stage "The Fair Rewards," just published by Alfred A. Knopf, are Clyde Fitch, Charles Frohman, Arthur Hopkins, Anna Held, Sara Cawell Le Moyne, George Arliss and Cyril Maude. In addition other figures of the stage of the present and the past appear under pseudonyms. The period covered by the novel extends from approximately the time of "The Merry Widow" down to the production of "The Jest" at the Plymouth Theater.

Fannie Hurst, author of "Star Dust" (Harper's) before leaving for her European trip February 18, said in regard to the movies versus fiction: "Comparatively few of the arrived authors of to-day are standing by the ship of fiction. They are moving in great numbers across the painted desert to the studios in California, dividing their time between the advocacy of the old job and the vocation of the new. Motion picture cramp has become more of a menace than writer's cramp, because motion picturitis distorts style and warps sincerity."

Gunnar Gunnarsson's epics of Iceland, "Guest the One-Eyed," which has just been brought out in this country by Alfred A. Knopf as one of the Dorzoi-Gyldendal books, was originally published in Denmark in four volumes, the first in 1912 and the last in 1914. The story divides itself naturally into four parts, accordingly. The American edition is, however, a single volume. "Guest" has been translated into Swedish, English, Finnish and Dutch. Gunnarsson's earlier novel, "The Sworn Brothers," is also being translated into Dutch, and will be brought out in Holland immediately.

Stephen Leacock returned recently, after a three months' lecture tour of England and Scotland, to resume his duties as professor of political economy at McGill University, Montreal. He promises, however, to find time to tell all about his "Discovery of England" in a new humorous book which Dodd, Mead will publish later in the year.

Through his publishers, the Harpers, W. L. George, creator of that disturbing young woman "Ursula Trent," answers the numerous assaults made upon her morals by the literary editors throughout the country: "Ursula is what she is, and it is not my affair. A novelist creates a character—a woman who is young, pretty, educated in a certain way and placed in a certain kind of family." Then he says: "What will she do?" Well, that is not his business. It is his character's business. He can't stop her. She is what she is, and he tells you what happens to her. If I could have stopped Ursula she would not be a real character. There were Ursulas before the war in America as well as England—especially in Greenwich Village—and out of the war there are more of them. Before the war the Ursulas hid what they were doing. Now they advertise it. As regards what Ursula did, I tried to show that it is not only what women do to the world, but what the world does to them. There is now in England an awful struggle among the women just for employment because the fathers, husbands and brothers are dead. So the women cut one another's wages. Ursula finds herself poor, therefore. She can't have any pleasure. What she wants is not sex. She wants society, laughter, theaters, the ordinary little things of life. Human beings are what they are, good and evil mixed. We do the best we can, for we are poor, weak things. In a word, Ursula was the best Ursula her feeble weak strength allowed her to be."